

Child Labor By Prachi

What is Child Labour?

Child labour is the employment of children under an age determined by law or custom. The UNICEF estimates that around 250 million children aged 5-14, excluding child domestic labour, in developing countries, about 16 per cent of all children in this age group, are involved in child labour.

More boys than girls are involved in child labour, however many of the types of work girls are involved in are invisible. It is estimated that roughly 90 per cent of children involved in domestic labour are girls.

Primary cause of child labour is parental poverty, so children work because their survival and that of their families depend on it, and in some cases, wicked adults take advantage of their vulnerability. Child labour is also due to weaknesses in education systems and is deeply rooted in cultural and social attitudes and traditions.

These kids do not go to school and have little or no time to play. Many do not receive proper nutrition or care. They are denied the chance to be children.

Mostly, these kids put their health, education, personal and social development, and many a time their lives at risk. In some circumstances they work full-time at an early age in hazardous workplaces, for limited or no pay. Most of these children live on the streets in bad conditions.

The only positive part of child labour is that work can help children learn responsibility, and develop particular skills that will benefit them in later life. It is also a crucial root of income that helps to support working kids and their families.

What has your country, other countries/the UN done about this problem already? Has it worked?

The international community, which includes intergovernmental organizations such as ILO, other UN agencies, the World Bank, national governments and civil society organizations across the globe, has rallied worldwide to fight the most abusive and exploitative forms of child labour.

The Children and Young Persons Act of 1933, which was amended in 1963, established UK's current laws on child labour. These laws impose that:

- ✓ Children under 13 MAY NOT be employed.
- ✓ A school child MAY NOT work during school hours, over two hours on a school day or Sunday, before 7AM or after 7PM, and 13-14 year olds MAY NOT work over 5 hours and 15 year olds 8 hours on Saturday.
- ✓ Children MAY NOT hold jobs requiring heavy physical labour. Certain jobs are also restricted.
- ✓ Children who work must be registered with the local education authority by their employers and must receive a work permit.

Japan has introduced a number of laws to protect the rights of children. The Labour Standard Law, which is a part of the Japanese constitution, provides full protection to

the young child workers. It restricts employers from hiring children under age 15 unless they complete their nine years of consecutive education. A child age 13 or younger cannot be engaged to perform labor without the permission of the Labour Standard Administration Office. Today, all the children in the country are under the umbrella of some kind of health-insurance plan. The Labour Standard Law prohibits parents from forcing their children into going for a job. The government pays an allowance to families with low incomes. This financial incentive helps parents avoid forcing their children to get jobs. Also, the parents are not allowed to receive their child's salary from the employer. The Japanese government has defined the nature of the tasks that employers are allowed to assign to a child. A child's wages are required to match the nature and intensity of the work that he performs.

UNICEF supports communities in changing their cultural acceptance of child labour, while supporting strategies and programming to provide alternative income to families, access to nurseries, quality education and protective services. UNICEF also works with employers and the private sector to assess and address the impact of their supply chain and business practices upon children.

What could be done?

- ✓ **Ban the worst forms of child labour.** Demand the government support the ILO Convention 182 banning the worst forms of child labour such as bonded labour and work in heavy industries.
- ✓ **Campaign on specific industries.** It's hard to take on the whole global economy, so just work industry by industry. Recent ACTU and international union campaigns have involved sporting goods made by child labour, medical instruments made by children (often exported to Australia) and the gem polishing industry in India where children polish diamonds, often sourced from Australia's Argyle diamond mine. Another recent campaign has involved the role of children in citrus juice production in Brazil.
- ✓ **Consumer education.** As consumers, we are the driving force behind the global economy - let's drive it the right direction. We can raise awareness, we can question stores about the labour conditions under which their goods were made, and we can demand proper labeling.
- ✓ **Education and training for women.** All studies show that when women are educated, trained and empowered, the incidence of labour by their children, especially girl children, drops dramatically. Your union's overseas aid agency, Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA - has many projects assisting skills training for women. Support them.
- ✓ **Enforce labour laws.** The government should make it illegal, and punish the parents who send their children to work. The employers should be punished too.
- ✓ **Family control of fertility (population control)** so that families are not burdened by children.

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- ✓ **Get rid of poverty. Create new jobs.** The parent worker should be paid a healthy living wage. So they can take care of their families properly and could save for future or any emergency requirements, and their children need not support them financially.
- ✓ **Give the jobs of child workers to their adult relatives.** This way, the family does not suffer, and indeed should be better off, as adult wages are generally much higher than child wages.
- ✓ **Prioritize primary education.** Primary education should be free, compulsory, well resourced, relevant and nearby. It is much easier to monitor school attendance than to inspect factories and workshops.
- ✓ **Social services.** Help children and families survive crises, such as disease, or loss of home and shelter.
- ✓ **Sponsor a child.** Take care of their basic needs. Cover up their education, and health care.
- ✓ **Strengthen unions.** Trade unions also play a crucial role in preventing and eliminating child labour. Adult workers who have the right to organize, Negotiate and bargain for a living wage do not have to send their children to work. Where strong unions exist, child labour is diminished.